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AUTHOR Wolf, Mary Alice
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ABSTRACT

Based on experiences with geriatric services workers, these strategies have been developed to respond to the ongoing educational needs of human service workers. The strategies are designed to help workshop leaders heighten human service providers' awareness of their clients' worlds. The three strategies outlined in this paper are the following: (1) combine the cognitive and the affective; (2) role play a visiting day at the nursing home; and (3) assign journal writing to the human service participants. (KC)

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# TECHNíQUES

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## Affective training for human service providers

*By Mary Alice Wolf*

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Human service personnel need to be given the opportunity to remember *why* they chose their professions. They need renewal and connection to the worlds of their clients whether they be ABE students, welfare mothers, low income families, elders, children-in-need, or disabled adults. And they need the opportunity to grow themselves. Their continued development is essential to their own lives and to the lives of the populations they serve. This **TECHNIQUES** will look at educational strategies which heighten human service providers' awareness of their client's world.

Staff development and educational opportunities provide the fuel for personal and professional growth that drives dedicated human service workers. Through affective education, such personnel increase their ability to communicate and to develop trust and good will with those they serve. When human service persons understand how their work can impact on the lives of others, they may deepen their understanding of the client population, whether it be the abused, the single parent, or the ABE student. Experiences in which teaching caregivers to see their jobs through the client's eyes may break down barriers between the caregiver and the client. Human development is a two-way process and we must recognize that, in addition to training in skills, we need to provide experiences for human service workers to review their mission.

In the field of geriatrics, we ask our caregivers to create environments for continued growth and autonomy of the elder. Yet, we often neglect to provide opportunities for the caregiver to experience her own growth or to reinforce the commitment that originally brought her into the profession. Developing educational workshops for geriatric caregivers is essential to the professional development of these hard-working individuals (Nahemow, Casey, Gauthier, Lusky, & Wolfe, 1988). The strategies discussed below are readily transferable to other human resource professionals and paraprofessionals. The ability to put yourself in another's shoes is a wholly human capacity and one which transcends individual learning environments. *These strategies have been developed to respond to the ongoing educational needs of this group of human service workers.*

### STRATEGY 1: Combine the cognitive and the affective

Essential to the training of human service providers is the path from the heart to the mind. All too often, we forget that training and caring are not the same thing. I may be trained to care for an elder in a nursing home setting, but my thoughts may be elsewhere. I may be thinking about my daughter's graduation, a particularly pressing financial problem, or another personal matter. The elder with whom I am working may be non-communicative or downright cranky. Yet, the mandate of human development is that all people must be engaged in meaningful exchange of feeling to grow. This exchange is particularly important for the older adult. It is essential that I remember that I am connected to Mrs. K. as I change her clothing. I create the opportunity for Mrs. K. to socialize, to integrate her past and present, and to be generative rather than stagnant (Erikson, 1963).

The reading of journals in workshops is a means to connect human service providers to the worlds of the elders they serve. Journals of elders teach caregivers about what is actually happening to the humans in their care. Suggested journals/diaries for use with nursing home attendants include *That time of year* by Joyce Horner, *The measure of my days* by Florida Scott-Maxwell, and *As we are now* by May Sarton (a fictional diary).

*"The ability to put yourself in another's shoes is a wholly human capacity and one that transcends individual learning environments."*

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Discussion of reactions to the journals and diaries is a powerful means to deal with students' rediscovery of the human connection. What would a nurse's aide feel if she read the following excerpt from Florida Scott-Maxwell's diary?

> On the fourth, or was it the fifth day I was
> the great wound healed for most of its length...
> Then I began to feel so well that I knew I was
> in danger of breaking rules...Then the rage I
> knew so well rose in me and threatened all.
> I heard the animal growl in me when they did
> all the things it is my precious privacy and
> independence to do for myself. I hated them
> while I breathed, "Thank you, nurse."
> (Scott-Maxwell, 1987, pp. 93-94)

How would each of us respond to May Sarton's description of old age? Caro, the fictional diarist, writes:

> Old age is really a disguise that no one but
> the old themselves see through. I feel
> exactly as I always did, as young inside as
> when I was twenty-one, but the outward shell
> conceals the real me—sometimes even from itself
> —and betrays that person deep down inside,
> under wrinkles and liver spots and all the horrors
> of decay. I sometimes think that I feel things
> *more* intensely than I used to, not less.
> But I am so afraid of appearing ridiculous. People
> expect serenity of the old. That is the stereotype,
> the mask we are expected to put on.
> (Sarton, 1973, pp. 74-75)

Each human service category has a literature of testimonies: diaries of welfare mothers, journals of families in crisis, memories of struggle and fatigue. The use of these materials in the education of caregivers can touch wellsprings of drama and personal affect. We should not be ashamed to confront the real world of our clients to learn our role in their development.

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**STRATEGY 2: Role play a visiting day at the nursing home**

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This role play develops an awareness of the inner world of another: what matters to him or her despite the caregiver's "helpful" assumptions. Students count off and one group is assigned to be the institutionalized elders. The other group plays the part of the visiting relatives (usually sons or daughters). The "elders" sit on one side of the room and await the visits of their children. The "children" enter, greet their parent, and take mom or dad for a walk through the visiting area. After ten minutes, the "children" say good-bye and return to the other side of the room.

The parents are then directed to speak. They are told, "Your son/daughter has just left. He/she can not hear you. Speak what is in your heart." Often the "elders" evoke the pathos of captured spirits, unable to transcend their worlds to enter into the problems and stresses of their "children's" lives. They express love and concern, however, and wish they could "do something" to help their children.

The second group is then told, "O.K., now the children will speak. No one can hear you. What is in your heart?" The "children" then express their problems, often a sense of helplessness, and the wear and tear of their everyday worlds. Often they are guilty because their parent is in the nursing home.

A change of directions now follows. The groups are told, "Actually, through some magical process, the elders heard their children and the children heard their parents. Go now and visit your elders again, this time with the added knowledge of what you have heard." The first visitation procedure is repeated, allowing the "families" time to share their new insights.

We have followed this protocol with poetry writing and, often, a song. Caregivers declare it most worthwhile and provocative in their retraining as caring resource persons. It is a moving experience and one which touches everyone involved. It particularly serves to break down the "them" and "we" syndrome so damaging in the caregiving of the elderly (Datan, 1984) which leads to age-ism (Butler, 1982).

The transferability of this strategy is simple. A group of learners might be assigned to be developmentally disabled adults who will interact with family members (or service providers); a group may take the role of ABE students interacting with a group representing community members, and so on. The most important aspect of using this strategy is to create situations where the individual human service worker can feel the constraints and potential for development which is lost when we fail to "hear" another's world.

**STRATEGY 3: Assign journals to the human service participants**

Journal writing has a long tradition in the field of human development (Wolf, in press). It has proven a valuable tool for training human service providers who need to process the experience of daily cares and human interactions. Making connections, becoming open to one's daily encounters with aging and the aged help the individual to sort out her frustrations and order her thinking. We assign a bi-weekly journal of approximately one page or 20 minutes per night. The writing should be free-flowing and the journals are not corrected for grammar, only checked. In time, students begin to look closely at how they relate to the elders for whom they care. One seasoned caregiver wrote:

> I look at the aging in a different manner.
> I find myself placing me in their shoes.
> How would I feel if I were treated or looked
> at differently because of my age? I really
> don't like what I see and hear. Can I do something about this? I certainly hope so.

A month later, she wrote:

> I have developed a more conscious approach
> speaking and working with elderly people.
> Today, in an interview with an 85-year-old woman,
> I found myself, for the first time, speaking
> *with* her rather than *to* her.
> (Wolf, in press)

The process is a powerful one: the journal-keeper becomes aware of her assumptions, daily behaviors, and feelings. She often becomes objective in her observations of others, a sort of anthropologist-at-large. The new self-consciousness and gradual ordering of events combine to create a strong educational process of development. Our words become a means of access to our inner selves and old habits are scrutinized; change can occur. The journal is time-honored but nonetheless effective as a means of exploring our inner selves and outer behavior; it enables us to take care and responsibility for the "small events" which seem automatic in life.

*"We should not be ashamed to confront the real world of our clients to learn our role in their development."*

When we put ourselves in the world of another our vision changes. The above strategies address some ways that can be used to connect the human service providers with their client population to create greater communication, develop trust, and good will. Caregivers, adult educators, caseworkers, and paraprofessionals are often persons who entered the human service field because of a commitment to serve their fellow humans. When burnout and time take their toll, human resource professionals often need the opportunity to be reminded of their commitment.

In each of us, there is a place between where we are in life and where we want to be. Education is the meeting place of those two sides: through learning we can achieve a better self. And when we do achieve a better self, we are ready to reenter the fray of human services. In the training of human service personnel, adult educators often provide theory, research, and technical updating. It is time that we considered the personal development of our clientele and give them the opportunity to rededicate themselves to the ideals of their profession. **AAACE**

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***Mary Alice Wolf is the Director of the Institute in Gerontology at Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, Connecticut.***